



Fire & Ice

A new look and understanding of the Pantheon of Northwest European Aesir & Vanir Dieties and the complex Cosmology through which they move

ABSTRACT

The Author draws upon his vast and unique knowledge of the Gods & Goddesses of the Scandinavian & Germanic peoples of pre-Christian Europe to illuminate and expand upon the limited understanding of the Deities of the Aesir & Vanir; and the complexities and nuances of their positions and roles...

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Chapter III

The Matrimony of Freya (Frigg) & Oð/Odin (Ygg);

[And the Subsequent Accord Reached in the
Aesir/Vanir War]

“Confounding stanzas were they—one-and-twenty and further—to scholar or skald, to master or novice... So long, did those Voluspiac meanings slumber, and stand, in mystery, unquestioned, and taken at face. Lo, they are the gem, bursting with truth—a bright gift—endowed to us through wisdom, conveyed by account of Gods, of Goddess—of all-being, of consolation, and cosmic law!”¹

An enigmatic quote, concerning certain inscrutable stanzas within Voluspa... What are we to interpret? What do stanzas 21-24 fittingly explain about this war between Aesir and Vanir? What is certain and clear, is that the Voluspa is a vastly fragmented written retelling, and that it has been most certainly interpolated. The forgoing is a sophisticated effort to accurately understand both existent and contemplated Eddaic lore & myth.

21

I ween the first war in the world was this,
When the Gods Gullveig did gash with their spears,
In the halls of Har burned her—
Three times scalded they the thrice reborn,
Ever and anon: even now she liveth.

22

Heith she was greeted where to homes she came,
The wise seeress, and magic she plied—
Cast spells where she could, cast spells on the mind:
To wicked women she was welcome ever.

23

Then gathered together the gods for counsel,
The Holy Hosts, and held converse:
Should the Aesir a truce with tribute purchase,
Or should all gods share in the feast.

24

His spear had Odin sped over the host:
The first of feuds was thus fought in the world;
Was broken in battle the breast of Asgard,
Fighting Vanir trod the field of battle.

What follows is an elucidation of these four stanzas (21-24), which is neither enigmatic, nor elaborate... To the contrary, it is straightforward, and based upon information found throughout the Eddas, as well the known related religious lore and practices of pre-Christian Indo-Europeans. It is also a genuine foundation for an evident clarification (and comprehension) of the explicit Origins, Identities, Relationships, and Natures of the ancient Aesir/Vanir deities, as well as how we regard them in a spiritual context...

Our understanding begins with the first line of stanza 21: we are told of a war—"the first war"—between the gods of the Aesir & Vanir. Line two informs us that the question of this war pertains to an incident² involving "Gullveig..." (this is a known kenning and/or persona of the Vanir goddess Freya), "...in the Halls of Har" ("Har" being cognate with the Germanic "Honor," and also a kenning for the Aesir lord Odin).

Freya is described in line four as "the thrice reborn," which is a known kenning, and also an acknowledged pre-Christian description of the ancient and impressive persona of the Triple-Goddess, found throughout early branches of Indo-European faith and lore (Rig Veda, Zed Avesta, Edda, & many others). Historians and anthropologists have expounded upon the meaning of the Triple-Goddess, defining it as a primal representation of the three distinct chapters of female vigor and being: the Virgin, the Mother, and the Crone; also, an explicit depiction of three female phases: pre-menstruation, menstruation, and menopause. These same tripartite aspects are also found in the Lokasenna (e.g., Gefjon—the virgin, Freya—the bachelorette, and Frigga—the wife).

Stanza 22 (lines two & three) attribute shamanic, supernatural powers to Gullveig/Freya: "The wise seeress, and magic she plied—cast spells where she could, cast spells on the mind." Line four further explains the admiration of said powers among mortal women (those who are, like the speaker of the Voluspa, probably seeresses/priestesses themselves). The word "wicked" in this line presents certain disagreement with the spirit of Voluspa, and is most likely a mistranslation, or worse, an intentional corruption via ideas held by the later Christian translators.

Stanza 23, line four, affirms, "share in the feast", which is a known kenning for—as well as an ancient heathen expression meaning—"meet in battle." Other, more contemporary transliterations, express this as meaning, "share in the sacrifice," or, more explicitly, that the gods of the Vanir and the Aesir would share in the recognition and "votive adoration" [ostensibly ridiculous for deities of valor] by their mortal adherents (in the same way as heathen warrior clan chieftains would sponsor and share feasts with their troops as a show of the chieftain's ruling tribal status). This will be expounded upon further in this treatise...

Is it really so far-fetched that a synthesis of the two differing Aesir & Vanir sociopolitical structures could be—and was—achieved through matrimony? This author, as well as many of my learned colleagues confidently postulate that yes [!], these two religious tribal systems mended the breach of war through marriage of the Aesir chief—Odin/Wotan—with that of the Vanir Queen (or Princess)—Freya/Frigga—and that the kin of Freya (her brother, Prince Frey, her father, King Njorth, and the sea-lord Aegir) were adopted into the Aesir pantheon & lore.

If we apply the logical simile of mortal man, to that of deity, we find an appropriately notable (and historically documented custom) followed by ancient Indo-Europeans (dated from as early as about 2500-BCE, and continuing well into the early 18th-century)... Long standing wars between empires (nations, and/or tribes), are healed diplomatically, through the matrimony between the ruling-class of respective combatants. Each (respective bride and groom) sharing in the governance and wealth of his/her counterpart, as well as over the jointly combined populace and state. When applied to an armistice (and agreement), the victor extracted from the conquered a grant (or “dowry”³), namely a portion of the conquered empire (soldiers, citizens, beasts, lands, etc.)...

Once married into a royal family, it was the Right of the bride to take possession from a Lord a Dowry, as well as a possession of her husband’s “Sir,” or family name—hence, Freya did incorporate Ygg’s (a well-known Surname for Odin⁴) into her own, transforming Freya to Frigga (or something closely resembling Frey-ygg-a)... This logic becomes apparent and easier to follow the deeper we look!

Let us examine the aspect of a dowry, given in exchange for a co-regency of gods Aesir & Vanir... If Freya was, in fact, wed to Wotan, what was her reward? Much as in times of old—as well as in contemporary times—the recompense was HALF of the husbands wealth, in other words, HALF of Aesir lord Odin’s afterlife kingdom: Grimnismal, Stanza 14, “...where Freya chooses whose seats shall have in her hall; half of the slain are hers each day, and half are Odin’s sworn [own]. “In this way all the spoils of souls lost in battle are divided up between All-father and Freya, and both gods of Aesir & Vanir “Share in the feast.”

Another woe awaiteth Hlin [Frigga/Freya],
 When forth goes Odin to fight the Wolf,
 And the slayer of Beli [a known kenning for Frey] to battle with Surt:
 Then Frigg's [Freya's] husband will fall lifeless.

The above cited Stanza 52 of the Voluspa gives us the most tangible and conclusive evidence of who Frigga (Freya) is through her relationship to both Odin and Frey—her “second sorrow” (after that of the death of her son Baldur)—occurs during the battle of Ragnarok, when her “Joy will perish...” Why? Because of the loss, not only of her husband, Odin, but also the loss of her brother, Frey!

A deeper-look at the obscure evidence which supports the matrimony of All-Father and Freya is found by scrutinizing specific books of the Elder Edda—two of which: Voluspa & Hyndluljod... In Stanza 29 of the Voluspa, Freya is referred to as “Oð's Maid,” (Oð is cognate with Odin, and found in various kennings referring to Wotan/Odin). One example found at the end of Hlyndluljod “you [Freya] ran to Oð, ever looking,” (this almost sounds like Hera peering over Zeus's neck). Another instance includes a Skaldic kenning which describes Freya as “Oð's bed friend.” It is also noticeable that Oð is a cognate with (as well as doublet of) Odin's name (Similar to the names Ull and Ullin—Od and Odin).

FOOT NOTES:

1 Folda Lither, (a heroic heathen “truth bearer”—burned at the stake November 9, 1514 ACE. Born April 20, 1488, Folda's mother Greta Mater, was hung shortly thereafter in 1495 ACE).

2 the subject of which must be further detailed at length in another chapter, which is based upon a self-imposed shamanic test, similar to Odin's self-sacrifice upon the tree—stabbed, as was Gullveig, by a spear.

3 or a “share in the feast”, as stated in Voluspa, Stanza 23.

4 The name “Ygg” for Odin/Wotan is found nearly a dozen times in the Stanzas of the Elder Edda, including: Voluspa, Stz's 28, 29 & 62; Vafthrudnismal, Stz 5; Grimismal, Stz's 9 & 55; Hymiskvida, Stz 2; Fafnismal, Stz 43... It is also found in many Eddaic kennings pertaining to All-Father, including “Yggdrasil,” meaning “Odin's Steed.”